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35 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

**SHEILA JACKSON
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18 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

HENRY CUELLAR

28 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

JOAQUIN CASTRO

20 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

MARC VEASEY

33 RD DISTRICT, TEXAS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Texas Democratic Delegation

Washington, DC 20515-4309

January 13, 2021

FILEMON VELA

34 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

VICENTE GONZALEZ

15 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

COLIN ALLRED

32 ND DISTRICT, TEXAS

VERONICA ESCOBAR

16 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

LIZZIE FLETCHER

7 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

SYLVIA GARCIA

29 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

AL GREEN

9 TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor
1100 Congress Ave.
Room 2S.1
Austin, TX 78701

Re: Request for Prioritization of Individuals of Low-Income Households for COVID-19 Vaccine

Dear Governor Abbott:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on low-income households. Hence, we urge you to include low-income individuals and households, including high risk minority groups, as priority populations as you consider guidelines for the allocation of the COVID-19 vaccine.

While your current distribution plan includes “protecting vulnerable populations who are at greater risk of severe disease and death if they contract COVID-19 and mitigating health inequities due to factors such as demographics, poverty, insurance status and geography,”¹ we feel a strong need to provide meaningful, perspicuous specificity by prioritizing low-income households. The income threshold to be identified as low-income for an individual is \$19,140; \$25,860 for a family of two, \$32,580 for a family of three, and \$39,300 for a family of four.² For these households, COVID-19 has posed even greater problems.

The Harris County COVID-19 webpage, when crossed referenced with Census data by zip code, provides the empirical evidence which makes it apparent that low-income individuals and households should be prioritized when allocating vaccines.³ Many communities with low-income households have reported higher rates of infection.

There is a direct correlation between income and health outcomes. Low-income communities are also more susceptible to COVID-19 complications. The World Health Organization released a joint statement in October 2020 detailing why those at or near poverty have less access to nutrient-

¹ <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-dshs-announce-covid-19-vaccine-distribution-plan%22>

² <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/incomelevels.html>

³ COVID-19 Zip Code Dashboard - public (aregis.com)

rich food and therefore they are more susceptible to infectious diseases.⁴ Further, low-income older adults are more likely to have existing health conditions and fewer economic resources, which makes them increasingly vulnerable.

In addition to heightened health risks, COVID-19 has exacerbated economic disparities in low-income communities. Among low-income adults, 46% say they have had trouble paying their bills since the pandemic started and roughly one third say it has been hard for them to make rent or mortgage payments.⁵ Approximately one-in-five or fewer middle-income adults have faced these challenges, and the shares are substantially smaller for those in the upper-income tier. Low-income adults who lost their job because of the pandemic are also more likely than those with middle or upper incomes to remain unemployed. With economic stability serving as a significant social determinant of health,⁶ it is of utmost importance that low-income communities, which are already at increased risk of negative health outcomes, be protected and prioritized in the COVID-19 vaccination process.

In light of this extraordinary crisis, we urge you to prioritize low-income individuals and households, including high risk minority groups, in the allocation of COVID-19 vaccine doses. It is our duty to prioritize individuals and households that are in dire need of relief. Thank you for considering this urgent request. I look forward to your response.

Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Congressman Al Green in Washington, D.C., by phone at (202)225-7508 or by emailing Congressman Green’s Chief of Staff Niha Razi at Niha.razi@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Al Green
Chairman
Texas Democratic Congressional Delegation

Eddie B. Johnson
Dean
Texas Democratic Congressional Delegation

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people's-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems>

⁵ <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2020/09/24/economic-fallout-from-covid-19-continues-to-hit-lower-income-americans-the-hardest/>

⁶ [Social Determinants of Health - Healthy People 2030 | health.gov](https://www.health.gov/our-newsroom/social-determinants-of-health-healthy-people-2030)

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